

## Navigating the Waters of 2002

**D**UXBURY, 2002 — Awakening on a muggy summer morning, you roll out of your Sealy Posturepedic to the smell of French Vanilla coffee from your automatic coffee maker. The kids have left for sailing class at the maritime school, and you find a note from your husband: he's at Bayside Marine, checking on your boat's motor which left you stranded last weekend off Saquish.

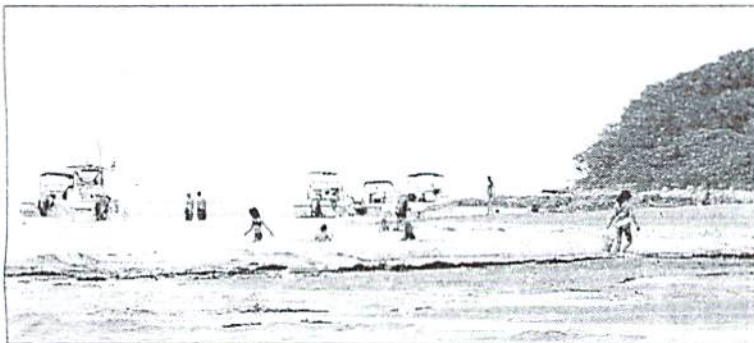
You gulp down your coffee and head out to meet a friend at Howland's Landing. There is no parking left on the road leading to the landing, so you pull in behind a long line of cars on Captain's Hill. You see your friend preparing her bright yellow kayak for your day trip around the bay and, as you wait, a trailer negotiates the steep road to pick up a Sea Ray returning from Clark's Island.

Once aboard you paddle off in the direction of Landing Beach and make your way



Two kayakers paddle toward Captain's Hill as Myles Standish looms in the distance.

*Photo by David Grossman*



Clark's Island lies in the background as the shores of Saquish teem with bathers and boaters.

*Photo by David Grossman*

through moored boats, turning back to see well-manicured lawns and stately homes along Captain's Hill. The roar of two jet skiers chasing each other in Kingston Bay interrupts your thoughts. In the distance is the persistent hum of lawnmowers at work.

Then you notice something you've never seen before — four round yellow buoys floating in a large squared area away from the moorings. Your friend tells you they are markers for an oyster aquaculture grant owned by a Duxbury family. It's a growing industry, in town and elsewhere, she tells you.

You head towards Morton's Hole where an immense contemporary estate sits on a rise overlooking the bay. A new boat is docked on a pier that covers a stretch of marsh. There you see a doe with her fawn eating berries on the shore. As you make the bend, an old gunning stand appears, and you push your mind back to the early 1900s when ducks and geese were hunted in great numbers from such blinds.

At Landing Beach, local families enjoy the waters of the bay. Kids jump off a floating dock as you glide by, making your way toward the mouth of the Jones River. You see an old shipyard in the distance, and, as you turn to paddle toward Bug Light, some friends in their Grady White spot you. They

slow down and ask you to join them. They'll tie the kayak to their boat, they say, and head out to Saquish Beach. Tired from paddling, you accept the offer.

As you arrive at Saquish, you spot more than 20 boats anchored near shore. After your skipper jostles for space, you decide to drop the kayak at a friend's cottage and motor toward Clark's Island for some tubing. Forty feet ahead, a sailboat equipped with an obviously failing motor drifts too quickly toward the anchor line of a large cabin cruiser. The sailboat's rudder and motor become entangled on the anchor line. It's a mess.

The distraught wife of the sailboat's captain (whom you happen to know and who swore she would never own a boat) is kicking frantically to keep their boat from crashing into the cabin cruiser. You are frustrated that you can't help. Bravely they wave you away,

uttering sounds that don't quite jibe with the joys of a morning sail.

Looking east, you see the crowded houses of the Gurnet, and down the beach is a lonely clump of trees called High Pines. It is there, the harbor master reports, that a family of displaced coyotes has taken up residence. As your friend's children take turns on the tube, whirling through the waters near Clark's Island, you notice there are no birds in sight. The island was once home to terns, gulls, and the largest population of egrets north of the Delaware Bay. Now it is quiet with only a few houses visible. The cedar forests are also gone. Even so, it is still a place of beauty.

The Grady White turns toward the Powder Point Bridge with the long stretch of beach on your right. A small square pen of mesh wiring stands in a sandy area. It is a makeshift home for plovers, a federally threatened species. In the distance, you see two plover patrollers slowing down vehicles headed to the Gurnet. Four plover eggs rest within the secured pen. The challenge to protect them will come in earnest when the plovers hatch in about 28



Where eagles once nested, piers are a more common site.

*Photo by David Grossman*



days.

Suddenly a flock of shorebirds takes flight in unison, scared by the arrival of two SUVs on the bayside's shore. The birds have traveled here all the way from the Canadian Arctic. Duxbury Bay is their lay-over for food and rest until beginning their marathon non-stop flight to South America.

For the wind surfers the day is perfect. There is a large group off Powder Point and the fast colorful sails attract a photographer in a small motor boat. Along the railing of the bridge are the omnipresent fishermen awaiting a hit from a blue or a striper or a summer fluke. Success is fleeting.

The tubing done, you decide to call it a day. As you leave and round a marshy bend, students from the yacht club and the maritime school are enjoying their sailing lessons. An instructor yells out encouragement from a small outboard as she encircles them. You spot your daughters, deep in concentration, learning how to raise and lower their sails.

Although the day is perfect for boating, there are still many boats moored in the harbor as it pushes into the bay. Boats are everywhere, more than you can ever remember, even in the much sought after deep-water moorings.

Heading for Standish Shore, you reach Eagles Nest, a place that is normally serene. But on this day two outboards filled with teenagers nearly collide as they chase each other. On the banks are beautiful homes, one after the next, each with its own pier jetting into the small inlet that once served as a haven for eagles.

You cruise past Standish Shore then move inland toward Howland's Landing. As you pass Cedar Hill, you spot a commercial fisherman with a motorized dingy arriving for an afternoon of shellfishing. It has been a good year for shellfish, with the harbormaster designating bonus shellfish months.

Seeing the fisherman reminds your friend that she needs to call a local fish market to have six lobsters prepared for tonight's guests. You lend her your cell phone, and recall an early morning jog when you met a Duxbury lobsterman at the pier preparing to go out on his lobster boat. "The Nancy L.". How he made you laugh with his stories!

As your friend drops you on

shore and you help haul out a day's worth of recreational gear—coolers, boogie boards, towels, and a bag of spilt sun tan lotion—you think about the great day you've had on the bay. An osprey's sudden squalling causes you to look up. The bird is gone, but there, towering over the treetops, you spot the splendid granite monument of Myles Standish. A permanent reminder of the great captain who once walked these shores and protected these precious waters. You think, "How far we have come." ▲

# Bay by the Numbers



**7**

Distance in miles of Duxbury Beach including Saquish.

**14,062**

Bushels of scallops taken from Duxbury waters in 1953 (valued at \$66,407). Today only a handful exist.

**18,618**

Acres of Duxbury waters available for shellfishing. 78 acres are conditionally approved; 796 acres are prohibited near Kingston Bay.

**47,000**

Cubic yards of sand and stones displaced after the Blizzard of 1978.

**400,000**

Cubic yards of sand and stones displaced after the 1991 "Perfect Storm".

**7,000**

Miles flown by shorebirds heading to South America who "pit stop" in Duxbury Beach.